

FRENCH'S ACTING EDITION

THE IRON ANN.

(ARTHUR GRAHAME and ADELAIDE ST. CLARE)

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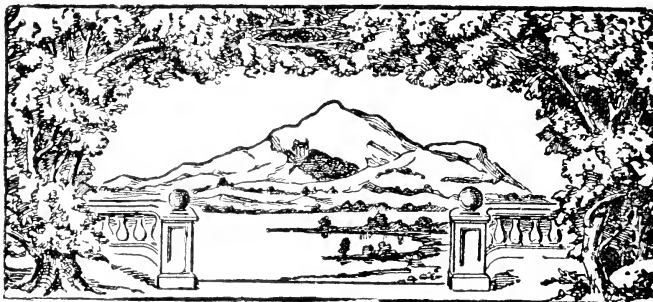
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THE IRON ANN

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A FARCE IN ONE ACT

By

ARTHUR GRAHAME and
ADELAIDE ST. CLARE

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CHARACTERS

ANDREW DUFFY *A newly married man, young, impulsive.*

ROSE *His wife, pettish, spoilt.*

AMELIA HABBIJAM... *His Godmother, an elderly spinster, fussy, precise.*

JIMMY..... *The Black Buttons,—a promising youth.*

THE IRON ANN..... *A mechanical domestic. An iron machine with immovable countenance, stiff limbs, grim mouth, (a male part).*

COSTUMES

ANDREW & ROSE.—Modern afternoon toilet.

AUNT AMELIA.—Silk dress with kerchief, apron, black mittens, false curls attached to a flat lace cap.

JIMMY.—Page's cotton jacket, white tie, etc.

THE IRON ANN.—Cotton dress, cooking apron, with directions for use printed upon the bib, large cap with bow, key for winding the machine hanging round its neck. For first appearance the "Iron Ann" must be tied up in brown paper leaving the feet free to stand upon, and labelled—"This side up with care."

NOTE. A coffee grinder or some other noisy machine must be used behind the scene when the "Ann" is being wound.

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THE IRON ANN

SCENE.—*A Sitting Room in Andrew Duffy's Flat.*—

(AUNT AMELIA discovered seated at the Piano (R) with back to the audience, playing old-fashioned airs.)

Enter ROSE. (L. crying sinks into a chair L.C. and sobs).

AUNT (*rushing to ROSE*). My sweetest Rose, my precious Rosebud, what is it? Tell your Auntie the trouble.

ROSE (*sobbing*). I can-can-can't.

AUNT. What, not confide in your husband's god-mother, who gave him his first spoon, and rubbed his gums when the toosey pegs were coming?

ROSE (*through her tears*). He told me I was his first spoo-oo-oon, but you never can be-lieve a man.

AUNT. My dear child, I never did believe one; but come, come, dry your eyes, he will be home in a few minutes, and how red your rose will be. (*Aside*). Such as it is.

ROSE. I don't care if it is. Everything goes wrong. We expected life to be all *couleur de rose* and——

AUNT. Well, if you prefer it that colour, my dear, of course I shall not argue the point.

ROSE. What point? there is no point. (*Sobs*.)

AUNT. Snub, then, if you must have it so, Rose; remember, however, that I did not choose that designation, for yours has a very straight tip. (*Aside*.) No-no, did I say straight tip, I seem to have heard the remark somewhere. (*Aloud*.) Tell me at once, dearest, what is the grievance. (*Aside*.) Dear!

dear ! dear ! Here's a state of things ; I ought to have come in a waterproof.

ROSE. I wish I had never married a flat.

AUNT. If you refer to Andrew as a flat, Rose, I must protest. Andrew is not a flat, either mentally or physically ; indeed, respecting wits—as men go—I call him rather sharp.

ROSE. I wasn't referring to Andrew, but he is a flat all the same to go and land us in one.

AUNT. Moderate your language, my dear ; you are not expressing yourself with grammatical precision. What you imply is that my dear nephew made a mistake in establishing himself in a flat. There I quite agree with you. I always set my face against his doing so, but when a man's in love he turns a deaf ear to the voice of, shall we say, wisdom. (*Sits, R. C.*)

ROSE. Oh ! say what you like, it makes no difference ; here I am landed with a flat, and no servant will remain. Barker's gone now.

AUNT. Barker's gone, has she ? Ah, I knew how it would be. That woman was bent upon attracting the attention of the butcher, and she found it impossible to do so down the speaking tube.

ROSE. Well, Aunt, you must admit it's heavy work flirting down a tube. So *risque* too ; how does one know what sort of creature is responding at the other end ?

AUNT. Rose, I am astonished. Your light tone in speaking of these really serious errors shocks my finer sensibilities. But let it pass, tears will not mend matters. Barker's gone ! The question now is, who shall cook the dinner ?

ROSE. I shan't try. Andrew is so insulting to my cooking. He said that if he ate the things I made we should be put to the expense of a funeral, and that it is cheaper to dine at a restaurant.

AUNT. "If we don't at first succeed, try, try again."

ROSE. I will not try after being insulted. He played football with my plum pudding, and cut the omelet with a hatchet. .

AUNT. Dear, dear, that *was* hard!

ROSE. Yes, I thought it hard after all my labour, so now he may cook his own dinner or picnic in the larder.

Enter JIMMY (L.). Please, Missus, a man am been at de pipe?

AUNT. To what pipe does the youth refer?

JIMMY. De call out pipe, Miss Habbijams.

ROSE. He means the speaking tube. Well, who is it, and what does he want?

JIMMY. It bin de greens, Missus.

AUNT. If you mean the greengrocer, say so, boy, and be more explicit.

ROSE. If he has brought the fruit, put it in the larder, and don't bother me every time a tradesman calls.

JIMMY. I say—"put him in de larders"—he says—I not speak plain English."

AUNT. There I quite agree with the man, and that's everything; you must go down for the fruit.

JIMMY. Please, Miss Habbijams, I can't get down de tube after tea. (*Pats himself.*) I pour hot water down to make it plain.

ROSE. Well, you are an idiot, Jimmy.

JIMMY. Dat am what de gross greens says—he speak plain English and go home.

ROSE. You can go—go—(*JIMMY hesitates.*) Go at once. (*Exit JIMMY.*)

AUNT. The youth appears to be only half witted; dear! dear! not only black, but unpolished.

ROSE. He uses enough soap to polish a brigade; oh, these servants! What a Paradise life would be without housemaids, cooks or generals!

AUNT. If you are thinking of Eden, my dear Rose, I must remind you that our ancestors were vegetarians, and lived in the open air.

Enter DUFFY (L. cheerfully). Well, wiffee ! (*Kisses ROSE and throws newspaper on table, c.*) Well, Aunt Amelia, and how are you ? (*AUNT rises, he kisses her also.*) So pleased to see you in this friendly way. Rose, dear, I've asked Dr. Hogg to drop in to dinner.

ROSE (*shortly*). There's no dinner. (*AUNT sits on sofa, R.*)

DUFFY. No dinner, my dear Rose ; what a feeble joke. I'm particularly peckish this evening. I've done a hard day's work and earned my meal ; what have we got ?

ROSE. Nothing.

DUFFY. Nothing ?

ROSE. Barker's gone.

DUFFY. Gone ! has the dinner gone with her ?

AUNT. The fact is, my dear nephew, there has been a slight domestic disturbance, which I always anticipated. However, we will soon set matters right ; at present, poor Rose is upset.

DUFFY. There, darling, don't fret—— What a pest these servants are. (*Sits, R.C.*)

ROSE. It all comes of marrying a flat.

DUFFY. Thank you, Rose, you put it in a concise and pleasing form ; you know very well you wished for a *flat* ; you said yourself we can look smart on less in a *flat*. A general servant and a black buttons will do all the work between them in a *flat*. By the bye, where is Jimmy, why doesn't he lay the table ? (*Rings bell violently.*)

AUNT. If I might suggest, Andrew——

DUFFY (*pacing the room*). Suggestions don't satisfy a hungry man, Aunt Amelia ; what is woman worth if she can't feed him ?

ROSE. I knew it would come to this : men are merely animals, they think more of their dinner and less of their manners every day.

AUNT (*aside*). Oh dear ! oh dear ! they are going

to quarrel. (*Aloud.*) "Birds in their little nests agree."

DUFFY. Hang the birds. I want my dinner. (*Enter JIMMY L, stands at door grinning.*) Where's the dinner?

JIMMY. In de larder.

DUFFY. Bring it in at once, and lay the table for four. Sharp's the word.

JIMMY. De pig am raw.

DUFFY. What pig?

JIMMY. Him what come to dinner.

DUFFY. How dare you make jokes of my guests' names?

ROSE. He doesn't mean Dr. Hogg, he means the pork.

DUFFY. Pork! I'm very partial to pork—go and cook it at once, you grinning idiot.

JIMMY. Yas, Sare. (*Exit L.*)

DUFFY (*shouting*). Jimmy don't forget the apple sauce.

JIMMY (*returning*). I not forget de sauce, Sare. (*Exit L.*)

ROSE (*running to door*). Jimmy!

JIMMY (*returning*). Yas, Missus.

ROSE. Can you make pancakes?

JIMMY. De pan aches, yas, Missus, I make de pan ache.

AUNT. I doubt if he comprehends your meaning.

DUFFY. Never mind, don't let us waste time, get along, try.

JIMMY. Yas, Sare. (*Exit L.*)

DUFFY. Of course, if I could have relied upon my wife's superintendence in the kitchen, Hogg's digestion would not be on my conscience to-morrow. As it is—well, he's a doctor himself, he ought to know what to eat, and what to avoid.

ROSE (*at window c.*). Your insinuations are cruel and unmanly. I did not marry you in order to be-

come a mere kitchen maid and household drudge. I have a soul above the stewpot, and if that was your object in marriage, why then it is a failure. (*Weeps.*)

DUFFY (*sits L.C., his back to Rose, reads newspaper*).

AUNT (*going to Rose*). Dear ! dear ! this is most unfortunate on his birthday. Hush, Rosey posey, come and rest upon this sofa and let me bathe your head with eau-de-cologne. That is always so soothing. (*Gets bottle from side table.*) Andrew, will you support your dear wifée ?

DUFFY. Eh ! support her ! Haven't I been slaving to support her all day ? now I need supporting myself. Look at that. (*Points at table.*)

ROSE. No, Aunt Amelia, don't touch me, don't pity me. I will go to my own room.

AUNT (*leads off Rose looking reproachfully at her nephew*). Oh, Andrew ! oh, Andrew, where is your heart ? (*Exeunt R.*)

DUFFY. Pish ! what a fuss. I cannot and will not put up with this state of things any longer. Surely some lucky fate made me buy this paper instead of my usual *Evening News*, and here, staring me in the face is this advertisement. It might have fallen from the clouds for my express benefit. (*Reads.*) "The Iron Ann. A Mechanical Domestic—um—um." Saves Sixty Pounds, "a day's work"—yes—yes ! (*reads*) "no followers—newly married couple"—the cap fits, wear it. (*Reads*) "Sauce and Stuffing, Sole Agents"—Sauce and Stuffing. It's the very thing we want to rid us once and for ever of all domestic worries. I shall then be called at the proper time ; the meals will be punctual, the waiting will be prompt and silent, there can be no feeble excuses made by a machine, nor can there be all that irritating and useless gossip with tradesmen. I shall go right off at once and bring it back in time to wait upon Dr. Hogg. "The Iron Ann" will beat all his scientific inventions hollow. But stay, I don't know that

it would be well to try the experiment in Hogg's presence for the first time. I'll drop a line and postpone his visit for a day or two. (*Sits at table and writes.*) The only difficulty is the price, 75 guineas, rather stiff. Still, once purchased it is as economical as a bicycle, mine is a treasure to me; it can't break its knees at a fence or eat its head off in the stable; (*closes note and rings*) and what I've saved in cabs, trains and omnibus fares would almost found a hospital for incurables. Jimmy, Jimmy!

Enter JIMMY (*L., feeding*). Yas, Sare!

DUFFY. Take this note to Dr. Hogg.

JIMMY. Too late, Sare. I roast him quite dead.

DUFFY. Ah! of course you're head cook and bottle washer combined, I forgot that. I will leave it myself—stay—tell your mistress that I've gone out on a matter of business, but shall be back in time for dinner.

JIMMY. Yas, Sare, you'll be back when dinner am in time.

DUFFY. Don't repeat my words, you're not expected to talk; do your work and hold your tongue.

JIMMY. De tongue what am for breakfast, Sare, or de tongue what am inside of myself?

DUFFY. Eh! what! how dare you eat in my presence; get out and finish your tea in the kitchen. (*JIMMY going.*) Come back there. Mind you have dinner ready. (*JIMMY stands in doorway holding his own tongue.*) Lay the table for three only. Don't stand there grinning, get out of this. (*Exit JIMMY.*) It's perfectly impossible to train a nigger, they make fools of themselves on every occasion. I'll give him the sack when I get my mechanical domestic. 75 guineas, that's nasty! no matter. I'll get it out of Aunt Amelia, she offered me a birthday present. Happy thought, that settles the question. (*Exit L.*)

Enter JIMMY (*L. with butler's tray and stand, which he places down left*). I bin having a good old tuck

in, I bin—me can cook, oh my ! just see de pig am roastin' ; de taters am boilin' ; de panaches am friz ; de apples am stew. I make de sauce for goose, which am de goose, me or de master ? Why him what gets most stuffin'—myself—inside of me. (*Pats his chest.*)

Enter AUNT AMELIA (R.). Jimmy, where is your master ?

JIMMY. Him gone out ter dinner, Miss Habbijams.

AUNT. Gone out to dinner ! What is the meaning of that ?

JIMMY. Master says business don't matter no how, and I'm to hold my tongue.

AUNT (*sitting down suddenly* R.). This is serious. Andrew is being driven from his happy home ; driven from his happy home by a mere question of digestion. Are you sure those were his words, Jimmy ?

JIMMY (*feeding at tray* L., *his back to* AUNT AMELIA). Dem was his words, don't stand grinnin'. Hold yer tongue inside of yerself, and set de table for two.

AUNT. Ah ! Implying that he did not wish us to know his change of plans. (*Aside.*) He has gone to some horrid music hall with that bad Dr. Hogg. I always doubted that man's friendship.

Enter ROSE (R.). Where is Andrew ?

AUNT. Don't ask, darling. Jimmy, leave the room. Oh, my poor dear Rose, troubles never come alone. Jimmy, *leave* the room.

JIMMY (*aside*). Ain't I put de fat in de fire ? (*Exit* L.)

ROSE. What do you mean, Auntie ?

AUNT (*rises*). Sit on this chair, dear, lean your head back and let me fan you.

ROSE (*going* L.). I'd rather not. I must see about the dinner.

AUNT. Never mind the dinner. We shall want no dinner. (*ROSE turns to* AUNT.) Oh, my Rosebud, prepare yourself for the worst.

ROSE. If you don't tell me instantly, Aunt Amelia, I shall scream.

AUNT. Do, it will relieve your feelings.

ROSE (*screams in an unnatural manner, standing C.*).

Enter JIMMY (*L. hurriedly with a bottle*). Is it de bottle you scream for? I bin brought de ketchup.

ROSE (*collapses on sofa R.*).

AUNT. Go away, Jimmy; my poor injured girl——

JIMMY. You bin scream for de bottle.

AUNT (*to ROSE*). Let me break it to you.

JIMMY. Which pot am dis put in?

AUNT. Leave the room, Jimmy. I can't attend to you. (*Exit JIMMY L.*) Now, dearest, can you bear it?

ROSE. No, no, I can't bear it.

AUNT. Try to, my precious, we women must fortify ourselves to endure the fickle moods of man.

ROSE (*sitting up*). If you refer to Andrew, Aunt Amelia, I think it exceedingly bad taste on your part——

Enter JIMMY (*L. with a tin box*). Please, Missus, what am de peppercorns to do? Sit in de pan aches or run round wid de apple sauce?

ROSE. I'm sure I don't care. What a bother you are.

JIMMY. De peppercorns am de bother, Missus, dem nebber answer my questions.

AUNT. James, leave the room, we do not require your presence.

ROSE. Go away, do, you stupid boy.

JIMMY. Shall de peppercorns stick in de pig?

ROSE. Do as you please, we don't care.

JIMMY (*aside*). De pig shall get 'em. (*Exit L.*)

AUNT. Don't give way, Rose. Be a true woman, try to face the worst. Andrew's gone——

ROSE (*shrieking*). Gone! (*Rises.*) Gone!! Gone!!!

AUNT. Hush! hush! darling, remember others, you are not the only flat.

ROSE. I am a deserted woman. (*Weeps on sofa.*)

Enter JIMMY (L. with paper packet). Dis here curry powder, I have mix it in de custards, dem don't take it well. Look berry green. Oh my! (*Exit L.*)

AUNT. Hear me out, dearest. I should have said, gone out to dinner.

ROSE. Is that all. So much the better.

AUNT (*sits beside ROSE*). I am glad to see you take it so well, darling, but I must caution you against this Dr. Hogg; a scientific man always appears to me dangerous. You never know what sort of theory, 'ology or 'ography he may take up next; and one never knows where these 'ologies or 'ographies may lead. In this case, I believe they have led to a common music hall.

ROSE (*rises*). A music hall! never! I cannot picture my husband at a music hall. No! I refuse to believe any such thing. (*ROSE paces the room.*)

AUNT (*following ROSE to and fro*). My dear, calm yourself. Remember, that the fault rests on your own shoulders. You ignored the fact that your husband was hungry. A man's appetite is not to be tampered with. Dinner before devotion is a very useful motto. Dinner before devotion!

ROSE. Devotion, indeed, that is at an end.

AUNT. We all have our weak points, my dear. (*Noise without; both pause.*) What was that?

ROSE. I shall be told it was the cat. (*Opens door L., calls*) Jimmy! Jimmy!

JIMMY (*without*). Comin', Missus. (*Noise continues.*)

AUNT. What alarming sounds.

Enter JIMMY (L., saucepan in hand).

AUNT. What is all this disturbance?

ROSE. Don't say it is the cat. No cat would produce sounds like that.

JIMMY. It bin master come home.

ROSE. There! I knew he would never desert me for a nasty low music hall.

AUNT. But why these heavy sounds ?

JIMMY. He bringin' her up de stairs.

AUNT. Her ! you mean him, boy.

JIMMY. Master said her.

AUNT. This is serious. Rose, darling, keep calm.

DUFFY (*calls without*). Jimmy ! Jimmy !

JIMMY ! Yas, sare, comin'.

DUFFY (*without*). Lend a hand, she's a dead weight.
(*Exit JIMMY L.*)

AUNT (*promptly shuts the door and stands in front*). No, Rose, dear, I cannot allow you to hear another word. I must inquire into this first.

ROSE. Nonsense, Aunt, it's only Dr. Hogg, he's always heavy.

AUNT. But not incapable, as a rule. I have my suspicions. Let me persuade you to retire to your room.

ROSE. (Certainly not—such nonsense !

(*A heavy weight bangs against the door.*)

DUFFY (*calls without*). Open the door, please.

AUNT. One moment. My dear Rose, his voice sounds unsteady.

ROSE. Really, Aunt, let me pass. I will see what it is. (*Removes her AUNT, opens the door. Enter DUFFY and JIMMY, staggering beneath the weight of the Iron Ann done up in brown paper ; they prop the parcel against the wall R.*) What have you got, Andrew ? Where have you been, whatever is it ? Do say something.

DUFFY (*exhausted on sofa*). Brandy, Rose, brandy.

AUNT. That is what I feared.

ROSE (*gets brandy from side table, gives ANDREW some in tumbler*). You seem quite done up ; whatever is the thing ?

AUNT. It looks like a drain pipe.

JIMMY. Oh, my, she am a weight.

AUNT. She again !

DUFFY (*holds out tumbler half full*). Thanks, I'm better.

JIMMY (*takes tumbler and finishes the brandy*). Me better !

DUFFY. The fact is, Rose, it's a surprise for you.

AUNT. Ah ! Jimmy, bring in the dinner, and we will face it.

JIMMY. There ain't no dinner, Missus, the cat's been and eat de pig and dem panaches.

ROSE. The old tale of the cat.

JIMMY. I bin tie up him tail in de larders, Missus.

AUNT. You're a wicked, cruel boy. I will see to this, Rose, my dear, and inquire for myself whether we can rely on this youth's accuracy.

JIMMY. You can't go into de larders, Missus, ain't safe.

AUNT. Oh, tut, tut. (*Exit L.*)

DUFFY (*to JIMMY*). Will you go. Get out. (*Exit JIMMY L.*)

ROSE (*sits L.C.*). Aunt Amelia has been so horrid, Andrew. I shall not tell you what she said, at least not at present ; but do unwrap your parcel. I'm dying to know what the surprise can be.

DUFFY. Let me get my breath, dear, and then I will explain, but you must call Aunt Amelia. As a matter of fact, although I call it my surprise, I look to her to pay for it.

ROSE. Of course she'll do that with pleasure ; what are godmothers for ?

DUFFY. Precisely ! but this is a heavy item and she may shirk it ; we must be diplomatic. Call her.

ROSE (*running to door L.*). All right ! (*Calls.*) Auntie, Aunt Amelia, come and see the surprise.

DUFFY. Rose ! Rose, be cautious.

ROSE. Yes, I know. Aunt Amelia, here's a present for me, and such a surprise for you. (*Exit L.*)

DUFFY. She'll put her foot in it as sure as my name's Duffy. (*Rises.*) I'm rather afraid even now that I've been rash ; supposing Aunt Amelia refuses

to pay. I shall have this heavy weight hanging round my neck (*kicks parcel*); 75 guineas would go a long way towards my trip to Paris, but there, of course she won't refuse.

(*Enter ROSE L. bringing AUNT, both talking excitedly.*)

AUNT. That entirely depends if the present meets with my approval.

DUFFY (*aside*). She's let the cat out of the bag already. (*Aloud.*) Well, Aunt, now for our little surprise. Supposing you both sit down while I unpack it. Got a knife anywhere?

ROSE. Here are scissors, let me cut the string.

DUFFY. No, wait a moment. I think I ought to prepare you, you might be a little startled.

ROSE. Oh, bother!

AUNT (*sits L.C.*). Prepare us by all means, Andrew. I feel that it is necessary. There have been insinuations respecting that parcel; but I will say no more.

DUFFY. My dear Aunt, you are under some delusion, the parcel is a present for Rose.

ROSE. Yes, a surprise for you, Aunt Amelia, at least—that is—— (*Examines label on parcel.*)

DUFFY. Do be cautious, Rose. (*Laughs nervously.*) You know, Aunt, you were so kind as to offer me my choice of a birthday present, and to—er, spare no expense. (*Looks at Aunt for a response, which she does not give.*) You are always so kind, so liberal, dear Aunt Amelia, that I have ventured to make my choice without first consulting you. (*Again pauses for his Aunt to speak; she folds her hands and shuts her eyes.*) In our domestic difficulties I felt there was no time to be lost if we were to save the happiness of home.

AUNT (*sings, shaking her head*). "Sweet Home."
"Be it ever so humble there's no-o-o place like Home."

DUFFY. Quite so, Aunt Amelia, quite so. (*Aside.*) Be quiet, Rose. (*Aloud.*) Well, to come to the

point, I chanced to buy this newspaper and my eye fell upon a very remarkable advertisement. May I read it? (*Sits behind table c.*)

ROSE. Oh, do untie the parcel first, Andrew. What is the use of all this preamble.

AUNT. My dear Rose, allow Andrew to make his confession in his own way; we are all attention.

DUFFY (*aside*). Confession! I don't like that word, it bodes ill for the 75 guineas. (*Aloud.*) Have patience, Rose, I wish to prepare you.

ROSE. But you are not preparing me by being so mysterious. I feel so excited and nervous, I can't keep still.

DUFFY. Do sit down and listen, Rose. This will explain everything. (ROSE *sits on sofa R.*, ANDREW *clears his throat and reads from newspaper.*) "The Iron Ann." "A Mechanical Domestic. The most marvellous invention of the age"—

AUNT. Stop a moment. Let me clearly understand. Are you reading a tract or a penny novelette?

DUFFY. Good gracious, Aunt, it's an advertisement for a new invention—"The Iron Ann."

AUNT. "The Iron Ann," indeed. I've heard of an ironclad.

ROSE. Is the Ann clad, Andrew?

AUNT. My dear! let us hope so. Proceed, Andrew.

DUFFY (*reads*). "The most marvellous invention of the age—wonderful success in America and Colonies.—(*The AUNT begins to doze.*) Saves sixty pounds per annum in wages and food. When once set in motion this economical servant will perform a day's work without wages, temper, beef, or beer." (*Thumps table.*)

AUNT (*half asleep*). Quite so! (ROSE *plays with the strings on parcel.*)

DUFFY (*reads*). "The Iron Ann has never been known to indulge."

AUNT. Ah! That's unusual. (*Dozes.*)

DUFFY (*reads*). "Requires no Sundays out, no Christmas boxes, no bank holidays, and above all has no followers."

AUNT. That's everything! (*Dozes.*)

DUFFY (*reads*). "Her appearance is prepossessing, being at once amiable yet dignified——" Rose, are you attending?

ROSE. I'm bored to death; do untie the parcel.

DUFFY. How childish you are. Have you understood a word of what I have been reading?

ROSE. No! I couldn't understand, so I gave up listening.

DUFFY (*looking from AUNT to ROSE*). Really, you women are the most aggravating——

ROSE. I won't be called a woman.

DUFFY. Child, then. Aunt—Aunt Amelia.

AUNT (*waking*). Very interesting, indeed. Pray, go on.

DUFFY. Listen to this, both of you. (*Reads.*) "We advise all newly married couples to make their purchase at once, and thereby avoid those domestic jars, which too often undermine the peace and happiness of an earthly Paradise. Price seventy-five guineas. Sauce and Stuffing, sole agents. London, E.C." There, what do you think of that?"

ROSE. Splendid, and so you've bought one.

AUNT. Don't believe a word of it, and the price is outrageous.

DUFFY. My dear Aunt, not if you look at the thing in its right light.

ROSE. Which I mean to do; so now I will untie it, Andrew. (*ROSE kneels and cuts the string.*)

DUFFY (*whispering*). Did you let the cat out of the bag, Rose?

(*The AUNT reads newspaper.*)

ROSE. What cat?

DUFFY (*whispers*). You've done it, the old lady has cut up rusty. Gently. (*Reads label.*) "This side up with care."

AUNT. Have you got this er—person in that drain pipe, Andrew ?

DUFFY. Yes, Aunt, brought it with me in a four-wheeler ; thought we had better have the Ann to wait at dinner. Rose, I advise you to stand a little further off, before I take off the cover. It looks better at a distance.

ROSE. Now, Andrew, lift the veil. I am longing to see its real nature.

DUFFY. I doubt if it has a nature ; that is one of its attraction.

AUNT. Decidedly ! Pray don't use the term "Nature," it is generally the prelude to a severe moral shock.

ROSE. Now, Andrew, one, two, three, off ! Unveil this modern Galatea !

DUFFY (*removes the covering. The Iron Ann stands rigid against the wall ; arms stiff, toes turned in*). Behold ! There's nothing to be afraid of. It's not alive, remember. (*Both ladies scream and hide their faces.*)

ROSE (*peeping*). What an awful creature !

AUNT. It doesn't even look respectable.

DUFFY. Well, I admit that its appearance is not so prepossessing as the advertisement would lead one to expect.

ROSE. No, indeed ! what stories people publish. How could we digest our food, if such a ghastly creature were waiting upon us ; and as to answering the front door bell, it would give all our visitors a fit to see such an object. Oh, Andrew, I am *bitterly* disappointed.

DUFFY (*endeavours to put the machine straight*). You are so impatient, Rose ; wait till you've seen the Ann in action.

AUNT. I beg that you will spare us that infliction. We have already seen *too* much. Rose, dear, the smelling salts, if you please.

ROSE. Dear Auntie, I am sorry you feel faint.

AUNT. Sick, child, sick !

ROSE (*fanning the AUNT with a newspaper*). Put the cap straight, Andrew, and can't you make it stand up ?

AUNT. It looks as though it had been drinking, and that is what I anticipated from the noise outside.

DUFFY (*finding the machine immovable*). Confound the thing !

AUNT (*rising*). What did I hear ? Am I compelled to leave the room ?

DUFFY. I beg your pardon, Aunt. (AUNT *sits L.C.*)

ROSE (*going to machine*). Look here ! Why don't you follow the instructions ? They are clear enough. (*Tears off and reads the instructions which are attached to the Ann's apron bib.*) "Directions for use"—"Wind the Iron Ann under the left arm the last thing at night, then lay her in a cool dry place, covering from dust or damp. She will resume her duties at six o'clock the following morning."

DUFFY. Look here, you wind while I support the machine.

AUNT. Not in my presence, Andrew. I cannot permit such a thing, I do not believe a word of the instructions. This person has never done a stroke of work in her life, I am convinced ; she is evidently one of the idle poor, and will have to go on the parish. It all comes out of our pockets.

DUFFY (*aside*). I hope it does. (*Aloud.*) Now, Rose, here's the key, begin to wind under the left arm, while I hold it up. Now !

ROSE. It's very stiff ; do you think it wants oiling ?

DUFFY. No ! no ! go on. I'm getting paralyzed with the effort of supporting her weight.

AUNT. It appears to me quite improper, for a gentleman to hold up his domestic servant, while the lady of the house winds her up, every evening.

DUFFY. We can't stick at trifles, Auntie. Begin, Rose.

ROSE (*winds the Ann*). This is no trifle, but it's stuck—ar there! (*Noise of wheels being wound, the Ann raises one arm, and fixes a glaring eye on ANDREW.*) Good gracious! it's alive. (*ROSE darts to window C.*)

AUNT. Another shock, and I shall have a stroke.

DUFFY (*continues winding*). Don't be frightened. There's nothing whatever to fear, I assure you. I don't understand why it doesn't start at once, it did in the shop. I do hope it's not got damaged in the four-wheeler.

AUNT. I wish, indeed, it had been.

ROSE (*reading from instructions*). It says, "If immediate action is required, shake the Ann gently, but firmly." Try that, but let me get away first.

DUFFY (*shakes machine*). Ah! Of course, I had quite forgotten that part of the business. (*The Ann repeats previous noise.*) That's all right. (*The Ann crosses the room with long strides.*) Now it's off! (*One arm extended and flattens its nose against the opposite wall L.*)

DUFFY (*C.*). Well, anyhow, it's started. Now isn't that the march of science?

ROSE. It may be, but I hate the creature.

DUFFY. You are very absurd, to make such a fuss. Bother the thing, it's stuck. I shall have to shake it again.

AUNT. Before you do so, Andrew, allow me to screen myself behind the sofa. I'm all of a tremble.

ROSE. I will come with you, Auntie. (*They get behind sofa.*) Don't be nervous, it's only a machine, you know.

DUFFY (*shakes the Ann and turns it round*). Now then. (*The Ann marches to window C. and violently pulls up the blind. Ladies scream and cling together.*)

DUFFY (*triumphantly*). Hah! Hah! Now we've set it to work, you see.

Enter JIMMY L., stands with open mouth. (The Ann charges at him. JIMMY howls and flies from the room, followed by the Ann.)

AUNT. What a relief !

ROSE. I'm not sure about its being a relief, how about my china and glass ? I can't trust that in the hands of an iron monster. (JIMMY howls without.) It's doing something dreadful in the kitchen. Andrew, stop laughing. You *must* go after the creature and speak to it.

DUFFY. That's your place, my dear, you are mistress. I would not poach on your preserves for worlds.

ROSE. You know very well, I am afraid to leave the room, how horrid you are ! (The Ann returns abruptly, thumps door, sets down hot water can and boots just inside.) (Exit L.)

ROSE. We don't want these things now ; do speak to it, Andrew.

DUFFY. Can't you see what a success the invention is ! it begins its work at six o'clock in the morning, draws up the blind, brings boots and hot water.

ROSE. We don't want to be called at that unearthly hour, and we shall never get our dinner, if it has to go through a day's work first.

DUFFY. Don't argue ; here she comes.

(Enter the Ann L. with duster and broom, sweeps, charging at peoples' legs. The ladies jump upon the chairs. ANDREW dances before the broom.)

DUFFY. This is remarkably inconvenient. Look here, I say ! (The Ann causes him to sit on the sofa.) It is no use to argue with a machine.

ROSE (on chair). I haven't even engaged its services ; we are bowled over with energy whether we like it or not.

(Enter JIMMY L. with tablecloth, etc. The Ann runs broom at his legs and knocks him down, dusts him upon the floor. JIMMY howls. The Ann dusts furniture, ladies' feet and ANDREW'S head; lays cloth upon ANDREW'S head and exit L., walking over JIMMY, who crawls out L.)

ROSE (gets off chair, removes cloth from ANDREW'S head to table c). Gone! Look here, Andrew. I will not stand meekly by while this impertinent creature knocks you about, it is simply unbearable.

AUNT. Andrew, help me down, please. The time has arrived for me to speak. I was not consulted as to this purchase, Andrew. (Both ladies buttonhole ANDREW and bring him down c.)

ROSE. Nor was I.

AUNT. Let me speak. I should never have consented to waste 75 guineas upon an experiment which is not only startling but humiliating in its details to er—our—such as it is.

ROSE. And absolutely hideous.

AUNT. Disreputable in appearance.

ROSE. Odious in manners.

DUFFY. You have not seen half.

AUNT. We do not wish to see the other half. We have received no sort of character with the er—young person.

ROSE. We don't even know her surname.

AUNT. Nor her capabilities.

ROSE. Nor her age.

AUNT. We have had no opportunity for a few private words with regard to little matters.

ROSE. Which men don't understand.

DUFFY. You are talking sheer nonsense; the thing is not a human being.

ROSE and AUNT (together). We can see that.

ROSE. It is simply an abomination.

AUNT. An invention of evil which I feel it my duty to suppress.

Enter the Ann carrying basket of knives and forks, and lays table noisily, bowling to and fro from butler's tray, etc. JIMMY enters L. and sneaks under the table unperceived.)

AUNT. Let me get away from that tornado.
(*Goes R.*)

DUFFY. Anyhow, we shall get a meal, that's some consolation.

ROSE. It really is a clever invention, but oh, how repelling !

DUFFY. Come, this looks like business, let us take our seats. Aunt, will you sit here ? (*Offers seat at table R.*)

(The Ann rushes from room L. taking small tray.)

AUNT. I wish to speak to the young person first ; if you can get her to stand still, there are several questions I should like to ask.

DUFFY. Oh, do let us have something to eat. I'm dying for my dinner. (*Sits L.*)

(The Ann enters with tray bearing coffee pot, eggs, toast and covered dish.)

ROSE. But the creature has laid the table for breakfast ; look here, coffee, eggs, toast, how annoying !

AUNT. Rose, dear, not so loud, the young person will overhear. (*Sits at table R.*) Oh, my nerves : *(The Ann rushes from room L.)* There, she's gone. In her absence I must remind you that it is Plebeian to show astonishment. Let us take everything as a matter of course.

(JIMMY lifts table cloth so that his face is visible to the audience. ROSE sits behind table C.)

DUFFY (*lifts dish cover*). I am only too thankful to take any course that comes. Bacon, Aunt ? May I help you ?

AUNT. Thanks, no, not at this hour—an egg, if you please.

ROSE. I call this rather a lark: let us call it high tea. How about Dr. Hogg?

DUFFY. I postponed his visit until to-morrow. Bacon, dear? It seems rather dried up.

AUNT. No wonder when cooked by a machine; the egg is hard boiled.

DUFFY (*kicks JIMMY, who makes a grimace*). I beg your pardon, Aunt, did I kick you?

AUNT. Not at all, my dear. I should certainly have mentioned it. You seem to have a very large footstool under the table. (*Puts her feet on JIMMY's back.*)

ROSE (*pouring out coffee*). Coffee, Aunt? Coffee, Andrew? I'm quite enjoying myself.

JIMMY (*aside*). I ain't in de joyment.

(*Enter the Ann with small tub, which she places on butler's tray.*)

ROSE. What is the creature going to do now, I wonder?

AUNT. Hush, Rose, don't wonder; take it all for granted. (*Cracks her egg.*)

(*The Ann comes behind ANDREW and whips off his plate leaving him holding knife and fork in the air.*)

DUFFY. Hullo! here, I say, bring that back. I haven't half finished. (*The Ann puts plate in tub.*) Look here, hold hard, Ann.

AUNT. Andrew! Andrew! Pray, be cautious. (*The Ann darts at AUNT's egg, removes that and coffee cup to tub.*) How exceedingly rude!

ROSE (*laughing with cup in hand*). This is too funny. (*The Ann seizes the cup from her hand and puts it in tub.*) Oh, my coffee! I've not done. Andrew, you must speak to this woman. (*The Ann rapidly clears the table, putting everything in the tub.*)

DUFFY (*clinging to the toast rack*). No, you don't get that.

(*The Iron Ann struggles with ANDREW, gets the rack, toast falls on floor and is eaten by JIMMY under the table*).

DUFFY. What a brute this woman is. I've scarcely had a mouthful. She's worse than a foreign waiter. (*Rises, goes R.*)

ROSE. I do think you might speak to the nasty thing and assert your authority.

AUNT. Hush, my dear, no doubt the young person feels she is doing her duty.

ROSE. I wish we could make her feel anything at all. You've often said you would (*the Ann washes up at butler's tray*) be master in your own house, Andrew, and now you are under the rule of a mechanical domestic.

AUNT. I've often heard of an ironclad being under the control of a man, but never, no, never before, did I see a man so completely under the control of an Iron Ann.

DUFFY (*feebly*). We must let a machine do the work in its own way; you cannot tamper with science, it will all come right in time.

ROSE (*rising*). Well, I mean to be mistress, anyhow, and if you will not speak to the creature, I must do so myself. (*Goes to Ann.*)

DUFFY (*at window*). I wish you every success; you might just as well speak to the kitchen boiler.

ROSE (*to Ann with dignity*). As you are entering into my service, Ann, I must lay down a few rules which I expect you to obey. For instance, I cannot have you washing up in the sitting-room, nor can I allow you to rush in and out without knocking.

AUNT. When we want you we shall ring, and we cannot be hurried in our repast, it does not conduce to comfortable digestion. (*Kicks JIMMY under table.*)

DUFFY (*laughs*). Digestion ! I've eaten nothing to digest.

JIMMY (*aside*). I bin eatin', and de jest am how to get in more, oh lor !

ROSE. I must also ask a few questions as to your cooking : can you make pastry, whip cream, etc. ?

JIMMY (*aside*). Sorry for de cream.

ROSE. Have you a light hand for cakes ?

DUFFY. That is an obviously ridiculous question, Rose ; you are wasting your breath.

AUNT (*rises and goes to Ann*). And another very important rule is that no followers are allowed.

ROSE. I don't think we need worry ourselves on that score, Aunt Amelia.

DUFFY. The fellow must be hard up, who would follow the Iron Ann. (*The Ann suddenly lifts tub and bowls past ROSE, spinning her round.*)

ROSE. What shocking manners ! (*Retires to window C. with AUNT and ANDREW talking apart.*)

(*Enter the Ann with crumb brush, goes to table, sweeps the air, hits JIMMY on the head, he howls. All turn round sharply.*)

DUFFY. What was that ?

AUNT. I told you so, it's a human being in disguise.

DUFFY. I expect it was only a screw loose. I must examine the Ann.

AUNT. What ! Let me beg, Andrew, that you will do no such thing.

ROSE. It's easier said than done. First, catch your Ann !

(*The Ann folds cloth, whisking it in ANDREW'S face as he approaches, puts it on butler's tray, and carries it out L., followed by DUFFY.*)

AUNT (*sits on sofa*). Of one thing I am quite re-

solved. I am not going to throw away 75 guineas on this disagreeable and insulting object. If Andrew chooses to waste his own money, well and good, he must forego his summer holiday.

ROSE. Oh, Auntie, you cannot mean that, we had planned such a lovely holiday.

AUNT. I mean what I say, Rose. My money shall go to worthier objects : there are the poor dear niggers to clothe, and the poor dear idiots to entertain with lantern slides—(*a crash without*).

ROSE. What has happened ? (*Rushes out L.*)

JIMMY (*aside*). Thank my stars, I'm not in dat smash up.

(*Enter the Ann with toilet things, places them on table. JIMMY peeps from underneath. Ann stretches across and washes his face. JIMMY howls and shows himself.*)

AUNT (*rises*). You bad boy, what are you doing there ? You deserve a severe punishment ; don't you know how wrong it is to listen to private conversation, you naughty false—(*The Ann rushes at AUNT, hits her down R. of table. Puts toilet cape round her shoulders, removes her cap with false front, and attempts to brush her back hair. AUNT struggles and screams wildly.*)

JIMMY (*dances with joy and waves the cap in air*). Oh my ! what a surprise ! Which am naughty and false now ? (*Enter DUFFY with umbrella.*)

DUFFY. My dear Aunt, whatever is the matter ? (*JIMMY throws down the cap on table and goes up R.*)

AUNT. My cap ! my cap ! Rose, my cap ! (*Puts chair cover over her head.*) *Enter ROSE (L. in tears).*

ROSE. Dear Aunt Amelia, come to my room ; we are both being insulted by man and beast. (*Exeunt R.*)

DUFFY (*fronting the Ann with umbrella L.*). Out of this you go. I will not be bullied by a machine. Jimmy, you push on that side.

JIMMY. All right, sare, I get de poker.

DUFFY. No, no, don't hit it, you'll damage the works. Now then, push!—push!

(The Ann endeavours to get at ANDREW'S head with brush and comb. DUFFY defends himself with the umbrella. JIMMY pushes behind. The Ann suddenly turns upon JIMMY and lugs him out of the room by his head howling. Exeunt L.)

DUFFY *(shuts the door and locks it)*. This is awful. I never was more battered in my life. Midnight revels at school were peaceful compared with this. I must return the machine to Sauce and Stuffing at once. But how? that's the question. It's done no end of damage in the kitchen; broken the window, smashed the breakfast service, and scalded my legs. Rose declares it was my own fault, because I got in the way. Dash it! How is one to get out of the way? It's like an American whirlwind, sweeping everything before it. *(Listens at door.)* Jimmy is catching it hot outside; well, do him good. I shan't interfere. Hope to goodness Sauce and Stuffing will make no objection to taking the thing back. I'd almost give them a five pound note to take it off my hands. *(Enter ROSE R.)*

ROSE. Has it gone?

DUFFY. I wish it would go; we shall be had up for murder if it doesn't.

ROSE *(listening at door)*. Oh, Andrew! it is killing Jimmy!

DUFFY. Sounds like it.

ROSE. And you can stand there unmoved.

DUFFY. She'll cook him for dinner. Another surprise. *(Enter AUNT R. agitated.)*

AUNT. What are these dreadful sounds I hear?

ROSE. The Ann is killing Jimmy. Andrew has ordered him for dinner; oh, Aunt Amelia, do interfere.

AUNT. I am shocked! My own nephew turned cannibal. This comes of keeping a man waiting for his dinner.

ROSE (*crying*). I can't eat any Jimmy for dinner, however he is cooked. I *was* fond of him in spite of his colour. (*More howls without.*)

AUNT. Andrew, it is your duty to prevent this.

DUFFY (c.). My dear Aunt, a nigger is very tough.

AUNT. That is no reason why you should make him into mincemeat.

ROSE. It is cowardly of you to stand there, Andrew, while your own Buttons is being roasted. (*Heavy thump at door.*) Lock the door, it's coming; put something in front. (*Brings a chair.*)

AUNT. Oh dear, oh dear! let me get away. (*Exit R.*)

ROSE. Andrew, do help me with this table; we must keep the creature out, cost what it may. (*Pushes table in front, thumps without.*) It's knocking! You see it was some use speaking. I told it to knock before coming in. Perhaps Jimmy is in the oven; oh! Andrew, isn't it a horrible thought?

DUFFY (*sits calmly on sofa*). Yes, women have a talent for tragedy. I should never have entertained such a revolting idea myself.

ROSE. Why? you told the Ann to cook him!

DUFFY. Pure invention on your part. I merely said it would do him good.

ROSE. I hope you are sorry you bought the nasty thing. Aunt Amelia says she won't pay a farthing of its price after the insults that have been heaped upon her head.

DUFFY. Heaped upon it! Taken off her head, you mean. (*Laughs.*) It was awfully funny!

ROSE. So like a man to laugh. If she hears you she'll cut you out of her will. There is nothing a woman resents so much as losing her hair.

DUFFY. If Sauce and Stuffing refuse to take back this beast, I shall lose my trip to Paris.

ROSE. Paris! not Paris, you mean Scarborough.

DUFFY. Ah! that is in the dim future; I was saving up for a run to Paris with Dr. Hogg.

ROSE. With Dr. Hogg! without me? I never heard of such treachery. Paris without your wife?

DUFFY. It's only a fool who goes to Paris with her.

ROSE. Then I insist upon your playing the fool for once in your life. I will cheerfully give up Scarborough for Paris, and we can look round for my winter furs. I've been saving up for a sealskin. (*Sits beside ANDREW on sofa.*)

DUFFY. Glad to hear it, you can help me towards the 75 guineas. You must give up the sealskin.

ROSE. Indeed, I will not. The Ann was your present, you can't expect me to pay for your surprise. You must give up Paris; we will economize at Herne Bay. (*Sounds at window.*)

DUFFY (*looks round uncertain where sounds come from*). Beastly place!

ROSE. It's very healthy, and will do you far more good than racketing about with Dr. Hogg.

DUFFY. Hang health! I must have some mental interest. (*The window is opened from outside and JIMMY looks in.*) It's you, is it?

JIMMY (*in agony*). Oh, Sare! oh, Missus! I'll nebber do it no more. Take de debbil away. She am makin' hash of my cold legs outside.

DUFFY. Come inside. (*Goes to window.*) Oh, I see, the Ann has hold of you. I must shut the window.

JIMMY. No, no, massa—bring in de legs first.

ROSE (*rises*). Poor, poor Jimmy. Andrew, let him in. (*The Ann's head appears above JIMMY'S.*) It's coming! Shut the window at once—at once, quick!

JIMMY (*takes a flying leap into the room and kneels*

at DUFFY's feet). Save me, Sare, I nebber eat de pig again: oh, my! I'm roll into tartlets. I am whipped for custards, I am roastin' for pigs, chopped up small for de mince pies. Yas, Sare, I have been cookin'; oh my! ain't it hot. You see me sarve up at all de courses. Jimmy pie! Jimmy toast! Jimmy all tapioca.

(The Ann glares through window, and puts one foot inside.)

ROSE. Shield me, Andrew, it's getting in; oh! do be a hero and shut the window. *(Clings to ANDREW's neck.)*

JIMMY *(clings to ANDREW's knees)*. Be Nero, Sare! Be Nero!

DUFFY (C.). How can I be anything if you hang on?

(The Ann comes through window waving kitchen chopper and rolling pin. JIMMY crawls behind sofa. ROSE screams and flies off stage R. ANDREW pulls away the furniture from door L. The Ann pulls him back by his coat tails and forces him into a chair L.C.)

DUFFY. I will not sit down, I will be obeyed. *(Struggles with Ann.)* I will be master in my own house.

(The Ann sits down deliberately on ANDREW's knees and begins to darn socks out of work basket.)

DUFFY *(struggles. The Ann immovable)*. Get up, you thing! Flesh and blood won't bear this.

JIMMY. Aint massa enjoyin' hisself? *(Goes to door R., calls.)* Missus, you're wanted, quick!

DUFFY. Shut up, you idiot. Call the police, can't you. I shall die in a minute. *Enter ROSE (R.)*

ROSE. This is too much! The creature is

making love to my husband. Aunt Amelia, come and protect me.

(Enter AUNT R., *breathless and speechless, stands gesticulating. ROSE weeps on her shoulder. The Ann clings round DUFFY'S neck.*)

JIMMY (*calls out of window c.*). Murders! Bobby! Murders!

DUFFY. I'm being murdered.

ROSE (*calls at window*). Murder!

AUNT. Fire!

DUFFY. Police!

JIMMY (*at door left*). Murders! Fire! Bobbies! Fire!

(ANDREW *struggles to his feet, pushing the Ann R. The works begin to run down, arms stiffen, toes turn in, and the Ann falls back rigid against the wall R.*)

DUFFY. Hurrah! The wheels have run down. Now is the time to get rid of it. Jimmy, lend a hand.

AUNT (L.). Are you quite sure that it is not merely faint, poor thing?

ROSE. Poor thing, indeed! It's we who are poor. Get it out of the flat, Andrew, for fear it should recover. (*Goes to AUNT L.*)

JIMMY (*looking out of window c.*). De bobby am comin' to take her in charge.

DUFFY. We will send her down in the lift to meet him; they can have it out at the bottom.

(*Takes off his coat, and with JIMMY carries off the Ann, who remains rigid. Exeunt L.*)

ROSE (*embracing AUNT*). Kiss me, Auntie, let us be happy once again. I will cook the dinner myself.

AUNT. Dear, sweet, forgiving Rosebud. (*Embrace again.*) Enter DUFFY.

DUFFY (*mops his brow with handkerchief*). Well, that's over; you won't catch me investing in another mechanical domestic.

(ROSE *helps* ANDREW *on with his coat*.)

DUFFY (*sits c.*). Poor Jimmy, I sent him down in the lift with the Ann: he was in terror lest she should begin to work on the way; but her weight ran them down in no time, and the policeman took her in charge at the bottom.

ROSE. What a relief!

AUNT. Quite so! I am convinced that person's proper place is the "lock up."

(*Enter JIMMY with a blue envelope on hand tray*.)

DUFFY. Well, has the bobby walked her off?

JIMMY. De bobby says, sare, he ain't 'sponsible for any imitations. If dat Ann ain't real human body he can't walk her off nohow.

DUFFY. Hang it all! where is she, then?

JIMMY. In de lift, which am broke, and won't come up stairs no more. (*Hands bill to DUFFY*.)

ROSE. Oh, Andrew, we shall have to pay for that damage, too. Is that the bill?

DUFFY (*reads address on envelope*). "Miss Habbijam." This is for you, Aunt. (*To JIMMY*.) Give this to Miss Habbijam.

(JIMMY *hands bill to* AUNT AMELIA, *who sits on sofa, puts on her spectacles, and slowly opens it*.)

ROSE. Has the policeman gone, Jimmy?

JIMMY. Yas, Missus; says he must get funder orders from de four quarters.

DUFFY. Head quarters, boy! Head quarters.

ROSE. Oh, dear! the law's delay as usual. One comfort is the Ann can't walk upstairs, even if she does recover.

AUNT (*murmurs to herself*). Seventy-eight pounds fifteen shillings. I object to the fifteen shillings.

ROSE (*taking ANDREW up stage*). It is the bill, Andrew. How could you have the face to give it to poor Aunt Amelia after all she has suffered!

DUFFY. My dear Rose, I understand the old lady, she is my godmother, not yours. If a man of my age doesn't understand his own relations it's a pity. (*Comes down to AUNT, who still murmurs.*) Can I help you in your calculations, Aunt?

AUNT. Thanks, no. I was considering how many niggers I could clothe for fifteen shillings. (*Calculates on her fingers.*)

DUFFY. Well, Aunt, they don't as a rule spend much on dress. What do you think, Jimmy? How many niggers could be clothed for fifteen shillings?

JIMMY. Dat 'pends on de climate, Sare.

AUNT. I did not ask for Jimmy's opinion. The question is, who shall suffer for the folly of others: the niggers, the idiots, or myself?

ROSE (R.). Dear Auntie, we could not allow you to suffer for the sake of others.

DUFFY. No indeed, Aunt, the idiots must pay their own expenses.

AUNT (*rises and hands bill to ANDREW*). In that case, my nephew, perhaps you will settle this account.

DUFFY (*takes bill, turns to ROSE, both gaze at it, then at each other, the AUNT watching*). No summer trips this year; even Herne Bay is out of the question.

ROSE. It all comes of marrying a flat!

AUNT (*takes back the bill*). Give it to me. Perhaps "Sauce and Stuffing" will let us off the fifteen shillings. (*Goes c.*) Bless you, my children! I will settle the account myself.

ROSE (*embracing AUNT*). You dear generous Auntie!

DUFFY (*embracing AUNT*). Aunt Amelia, you're a brick!

JIMMY (*dances on table and spreads his arms over their heads*). Bless dem childers! Three cheers for Aunt Habbijams! Hip! Hip! Hurrah!

CURTAIN.

JIMMY on table.

ROSE

R.

AUNT.

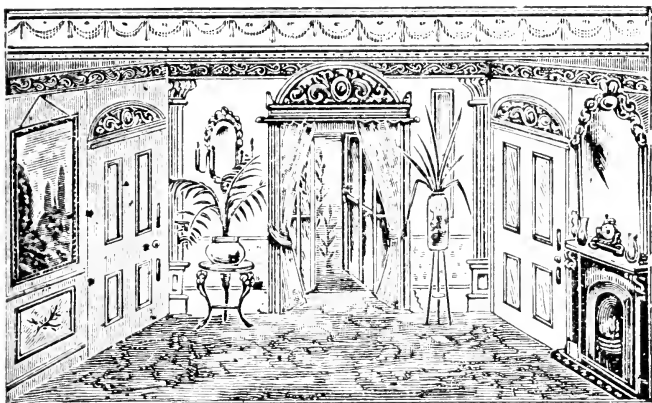
C

DUFFY.

L.



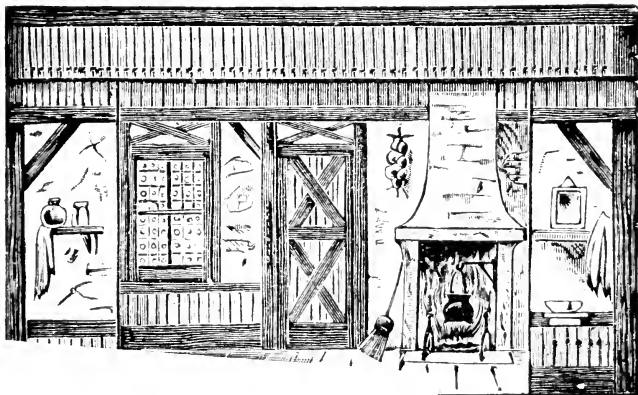
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